

Long Beach- Working to make our communities safer, Congresswoman Linda Sánchez (D-39) joined Congresswomen Juanita Millender-McDonald, Sheriff Lee Baca and Long Beach Deputy Police Chief Robert Luna for a gang summit at the Long Beach Main Library Auditorium on Saturday February 7.

Residents and community leaders discussed the problems that gangs pose to the community and provided information about community organizations and city services. Other guests included representatives from the city's superior and juvenile courts and the city prosecutor's office, the Long Beach Unified School District, the office of Gang Prevention and Intervention, and the city's Human Dignity program.

"More and more children are getting involved in gang activity at early ages. A growing problem that can lead to violence and gang activities is bullying. Over 3.2 million students between 6th and 10th grade experience it every year. When schoolyard bullying is left alone and not acted upon, it can escalate and lead to more violence, including criminal activity and gang violence," said Congresswoman Linda Sánchez.

Congresswoman Linda Sánchez introduced the "Bullying Prevention for School Safety and Crime Reduction Act of 2003," a bi-partisan bill to help stop bullying in our schools.

"For too long, bullying has been a problem that has been overlooked. We are now seeing that the consequences of ignoring this problem are very serious. Bullying and teasing are cited as the top school troubles of students aged 8-15. According to a report from the Kaiser Family Foundation, 55% of children aged 8-to-11 and 68% of children aged 12-to-15 view bullying and teasing as a big problem for people their age in school," explained Sánchez.

Specifically, Sánchez' legislation amends two existing laws so that federal funds can be used for bullying prevention programs.

Her bill has the support of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, a bipartisan, non-profit organization of police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, crime victims, and leaders of police officer organizations dedicated to preventing crime and violence by finding ways to prevent kids from becoming criminals. The group recently completed a study that found children who are the victims of bullying are more likely to commit suicide, and bullies are more likely to become criminals as adults.

"It is essential that we ensure a safe environment for our children where they can learn and succeed without fear, hurt or intimidation," concluded Congresswoman Linda Sánchez.